

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-4. (Canceled)

5. (Allowed) A method for distributing electronic information using a computer network comprising the steps of:

receiving from a consumer a request for a selected item of information;

formulating one or more offers based on predefined upstream business rule parameters wherein the one or more offers are associated with the selected item of information;

dynamically updating the predefined upstream business rule parameters;

providing the one or more offers to the consumer based on the dynamically updated upstream business rule parameters;

receiving a selection of one of the offers from the consumer;

validating the one or more offers for the selected item of information requested by the consumer, comprising the steps of;

for at least one offer, referencing an electronic contract between one of a content owner and distributor and a retailer;

determining whether the offer is consistent with the electronic contract; and

validating the offer when the offer is consistent with the electronic contract;

and

delivering the requested information to the consumer and enabling the consumer to use the delivered information in accordance with the selected offer.

6. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing an alternative offer when the offer is determined to be invalid.

7. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing a default offer when the offer is determined to be invalid.

8. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the validating step further comprises the step of generating rights data which determine the one or more offers associated with the information requested.

9. (Allowed) The method as in claim 8, wherein the generating step is performed prior to the delivering step and the rights data is delivered together with the requested information.

10. (Allowed) The method as in claim 8, further comprising the step of providing the rights data to the consumer in a secure format.

11. (Allowed) The method as in claim 8, further comprising the step of dynamically updating the rights data.

12. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of executing a financial transaction between the consumer and a retailer related to the use of the requested information.

13. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of indicating to a player associated with the consumer that the selected item of information may be rendered according to the consumer's request only when said request is consistent with said selected offer.

14. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of verifying the current validity of the previously selected offer at a point in time subsequent to the selection of the offer.

15. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

- a. receiving a request from the consumer for additional material about the selected item of information; and
- b. providing additional material about said selected item of information to the consumer.

16. (Allowed) The method as in claim 15, further comprising the step of providing a sample of said selected item of information.

17. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing payment alternatives about said selected item of information to the consumer.

18. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

- a. determining whether the consumer has a player; and
- b. providing the consumer with the player when the consumer does not have the player; and
- c. activating the player for the consumer.

19. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the delivering step is performed after the enabling step, at a time designated by the consumer.

20. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the delivering step further comprises the step of delivering audio information.

21. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the delivering step further comprises the step of delivering graphical information.

22. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the delivering step further comprises the step of delivering electronic information in a secure format.

23. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing the one or more offers to the consumer in a secure format.

24. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of monitoring the use by the consumer of the delivered information.

25. (Allowed) The method as in claim 24, wherein the monitoring step further comprises the steps of:

- a. detecting the manner of use of the information previously delivered to the consumer;
- b. determining whether the use is within the scope of the selected offer; and
- c. preventing the use when the use is not within the scope of the selected offer.

26. (Allowed) The method as in claim 25, further comprising the step of tracking the use when the use is within the scope of the selected offer.

27. (Allowed) The method as in claim 26, further comprising the step of effecting a financial transaction according to the tracked use.

28. (Allowed) The method as in claim 27, further comprising the step of effecting a financial transaction according to the selected offer.

29. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing an offer that allows the consumer to pay an amount for each instance of use of the information.

30. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of providing an offer that allows the consumer to pay a fee for unlimited use of the information for a period of time.

31. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, wherein the step of receiving a request further comprises the steps of:

- a. receiving a query containing one or more search terms from the consumer;
- b. referencing a catalog to determine whether there is any entry containing the one or more search terms;
- c. returning to the consumer one or more content references corresponding to any entry containing the one or more search terms when such entry is present in the catalog; and
- d. receiving from the consumer a content reference selected by the consumer indicating a request for the information identified by the content reference.

32. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of receiving from a content owner an electronic contract representing an agreement between the content owner and a retailer.

33. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the step of receiving from a content owner one or more upstream business rules representing conditions for the distribution of selected item of information.

34. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:
 - a. receiving a candidate offer from a retailer;
 - b. certifying the candidate offer as a certified offer; and
 - c. sending the certified offer to the retailer.

35. (Allowed) The method as in claim 34, further comprising the steps of:
 - a. determining whether the candidate offer is consistent with an electronic contract; and
 - b. designating the candidate offer as the certified offer when there are no inconsistencies.

36. (Allowed) The method as in claim 34, further comprising the steps of:
 - a. determining whether the candidate offer is consistent with an upstream business rule; and
 - b. designating the candidate offer as the certified offer when there are no inconsistencies.

37. (Allowed) The method as in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

- a. determining whether there is an offer accompanying the request for the selected item of information received from the consumer; and
- b. supplying an offer to the consumer when there is no offer accompanying the request received from the consumer.

38-43. (Cancelled)

44. (Canceled and Previously Examiner Replaced) A system storing compute-readable instructions thereon for execution by a processor for distributing electronic information, said computer-readable instructions comprising:

instructions receiving a request for a selected item of information from a consumer;

instructions formulating one or more offers based on predefined upstream business rule parameters, wherein the one or more offers are associated with the selected item of information;

instructions dynamically updating the predefined upstream business rules;

instructions providing the one or more offers to the consumer based on the dynamically updated business rules;

instructions receiving a selection of one of the offers from the consumer;

instructions validating the one or more offers for the selected item of information requested by the consumer wherein the validating instructions references an electronic contract between one of a content owner and a distributor and a retailer; determines whether the offer is consistent with the electronic contract; and validates the offer when the offer is consistent with the electronic contract; and

instructions delivering the requested information to the consumer and enabling the consumer to use the delivered information in accordance with the selected offer.

45. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the validating instructions provide an alternative offer when the offer is determined to be invalid.

46. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the validating instructions provide a default offer when the offer is determined to be invalid.

47. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the validating instructions generate rights data which determine the one or more offers associated with the information requested.

48. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 47, wherein the validating instructions generate the rights data prior to delivering the requested information and delivers the rights data together with the requested information.

49. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 47, wherein the validating instructions provide the rights data to the consumer in a secure format.

50. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 47, wherein the validating instructions dynamically update the rights data.

51. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 44, further comprising transaction processing instructions [[for]] executing a financial transaction between the consumer and a retailer related to the use of the requested information.

52. The system as in claim 44, further comprising a player associated with the consumer wherein the player renders the selected item of information according to the consumer's request only when said request is consistent with said selected offer.

53. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the validating instructions verify the current validity of the previously selected offer at a point in time subsequent to the selection of the offer.

54. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the request receiving instructions receive a request from the consumer for additional material about the selected item of information; and wherein the delivery section provides additional material about said selected item of information to the consumer.

55. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 54, wherein the delivery instructions provide a sample of said selected item of information.

56. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the delivery instructions provide payment alternatives about said selected item of information to the consumer.

57. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, further comprising a registration instructions which operate to:

- a. determine whether the consumer has a player; and
- b. provide the consumer with the player when the consumer does not have the player; and
- c. activate the player for the consumer.

58. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the delivery instructions deliver the requested information after enabling the consumer, at a time designated by the consumer.

59. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the delivery instructions deliver audio information.

60. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the delivery instructions deliver graphical information.

61. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the delivery instructions deliver electronic information in a secure format.

62. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer formulating instructions provide the one or more offers to the consumer in a secure format.

63. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 44, further comprising monitoring instructions [[for]] monitoring the use by the consumer of the delivered information.

64. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 63, wherein the monitoring instructions detect the manner of use of the information previously delivered to the consumer; determine whether the use is within the scope of the selected offer; and prevents the use when the use is not within the scope of the selected offer.

65. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 64, further comprising tracking instructions [[for]] tracking the use by the consumer of the requested information when the use is within the scope of the selected offer.

66. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 65, further comprising transaction processing instructions [[for]] effecting a financial transaction according to the tracked use.

67. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 66, wherein the transaction processing instructions effect the financial transaction according to the selected offer.

68. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer formulating instructions provide an offer that allows the consumer to pay an amount for each instance of use of the information.

69. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer formulating instructions provide an offer that allows the consumer to pay a fee for unlimited use of the information for a period of time.

70. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, further comprising query instructions which operate to:

- a. receive a query containing one or more search terms from the consumer;
- b. reference a catalog to determine whether there is any entry containing the one or more search terms;
- c. return to the consumer one or more content references corresponding to any entry containing the one or more search terms when such entry is present in the catalog; and

d. receive from the consumer a content reference selected by the consumer indicating a request for the information identified by the content reference.

71. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer formulating instructions utilize an electronic contact representing an agreement between a content owner and a retailer in formulating the one or more offers.

72. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer formulating instructions utilize one or more business rules representing conditions for the distribution of selected item of information in formulating the one or more offers.

73. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 44, further comprising certifying instructions [[for]] certifying a candidate offer received from a retailer as a certified offer and sending the certified offer to the retailer.

74. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 73, wherein the certifying instructions determine whether the candidate offer is consistent with an electronic contract and designate the candidate offer as the certified offer when there are no inconsistencies.

75. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 73, wherein the certifying instructions determine whether the candidate offer is consistent with a business rule and designate the candidate offer as the certified offer when there are no inconsistencies.

76. (Previously Examiner Amended) The system as in claim 44, wherein the offer providing instructions operate to:

- a. determine whether there is an offer accompanying the request for the selected item of information received from the consumer; and
- b. supply an offer to the consumer when there is no offer accompanying the request received from the consumer.

77-91. (Canceled)